Centre in the States and Union Territories where such Centre does not exist.

Amendment of the Rehabilitation Council of India Act

3597. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention have been drawn to a news-item appeared in "The Times of India", New Delhi edition dated 27th May, 1998 under the caption "NGOs urge Government to withdraw impractical clauses" of the Rehabilitation Council of India Act; and

(b) if so, the Government's reaction thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) An Expert Committee has been constituted to look into the various provisions of the Rehabilitation Council of India Act requiring amendments.

Central Assistance for Special Component Plan for SC

3598. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scheme of special central assistance of Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes is under implementation for the last five years;

(b) whether the evaluation of the scheme is conducted from time to time; and

(c) the number of persons who had been covered under these schemes, particularly people of remote area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two Research Studies on utilisation of Special Central Assistance one in U.P. and the other in Rajasthan covering the period 1992—96 have already been got conducted. Evaluation Studies of Special Central Assistance funded schemes in 7 States have been entrusted to National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai in March, 1998.

(c) 119.79 lakhs SC families including families in rural/remote areas in 24 States/UTs have been covered under various economic development schemes/ programmes for SCs during the last five years.

Special Central Assistance for SCs in Maharashtra

3599. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are providing special central assistance to Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes of Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof for the last three years, year-wise;

(c) in what way the plan has helped the Scheduled Castes of the State; and

(d) the other welfare measures being taken by Government for the Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The details of Special Central Assistance released during the last three years are given below:

Year	SCA Released (Rs. in lakhs)
1995-96	1745.47
1996-97	1448.87
1997-98	1922.45

(c) It has helped particularly in the economic development of SC families below the poverty line. During the last three years 3.54 lakh SC families have been economically assisted under various economic development schemes implemented under Special Component Plan.

(d) The Government provide financial assistance to Government of Maharashtra under the following Centrally Sponsored Schemes for SCs for implementing various welfare programmes for SCs in Maharashtra:

(1) Share Capital Assistance to Scheduled Castes Development Corporation.

(2) Post-Matric Scholarship for SC/ ST students.

(3) Pre-Matric Scholarship for the Children of those engaged in unclean occupation.

(4) Boys Hostel for SC Students.

(5) Girls Hostel for SC Students.

(6) Coaching & Allied Schemes.

(7) Book Banks.

(8) National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their dependence.

Besides, grant-in-aid is given direct to voluntary Organisations for implementing various welfare programmes for SCs in Maharashtra.

National Policy on Welfare of Elders

3600. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposed to evolve a national policy on welfare of elders in view of about 11 crores elders above the age of 60 years residing in the country; and

(b) the action plans to provide affordable health care facilities to elders under welfare programmes in the international year of elder persons declared by UN i.e., 1999?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir, a draft National Policy for Older Persons is being finalised after consultation with experts and leading voluntary agencies working in this area.

(b) Health care is one of the components of the draft National Policy for Older Persons. As a part of this Ministry's ongoing Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Organisation for programmes relating to Aged, financial assistance is provided to Voluntary Organisations for inter alia, operating & maintaining Mobile Medicare Units for Elders. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is also providing primary health care facilities through Primary Health Centre and Community Health Centre. Specialist Medical facilities are available in sub-district Hospitals. Health needs of ageing people are also being addressed through the National Health Scheme especially, the National Programmes for Control of Blindness under which mostly old people are beneficiaries. Besides, various medical insurance schemes are available.

National Trust for People with Mental Retardation

3601. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a National Trust for people with mental retardation has since been set up: